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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003538

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ANBAR PRT: IRAQ AWAKENING LEADER SAYS SUNNI TRIBAL
MOVEMENT READY TO JOIN MALIKI GOVERNMENT

REF: BAGHDAD 03451

Classified By: Acting Anbar PRT Team Leader COL William Dwiggins
for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an Anbar PRT reporting cable.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) The leader of the anti-insurgency Sunni tribal movement, Awakening Council of Iraq (SAI), Ahmed Abu Risha, told us October 24 that his organization will offer PM Maliki a list of SAI-backed candidates to fill the gap left by the Tawafuq walkout. Ahmed passed us a letter he planned to send that evening to Maliki, dated October 24, listing 11 SAI-backed candidates as ministers. Ahmed told us he had spoken with Maliki about joining his government and was convinced the PM would accept the SAI offer. The decision to join Maliki's government comes as SAI, which was formed as an ad-hoc tribal movement in 2006 to drive Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) from Anbar Province, attempts to move more decisively onto the national stage. SAI's decision to offer candidates to Maliki also comes after a week of political haggling in Anbar, as SAI moved to strengthen its position in the province. The decision to support Maliki could herald a new national role for SAI, even though it has yet to rise above its tribal roots in Anbar Province. SAI is making the move to the national stage before it has fully secured its power base in Anbar. END SUMMARY.

"GET IRAQ MOVING"

[1](#)3. (C) Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha, leader of the anti-insurgency Sunni tribal movement, Sahawa al-Iraq, or Awakening Council of Iraq (SAI), told us October 24 that SAI will offer PM Maliki a list of SAI-backed candidates to fill the Tawafuq walkout and, in his words, "get Iraq moving again." Surrounded by advisors at his walled compound in Ramadi, Ahmed told us that his October 21 meeting in Baghdad with Adnan Duleimi, President of the Tawafuq Front, had convinced him that Duleimi will not be able to mend fences with Maliki, and that the time to act is now. "Mr. Duleimi cannot get along with the Prime Minister," Ahmed said. "Even when he tries, he fails. I can get along with the Prime Minister. I can work with him."

ELEVEN CANDIDATES

[1](#)4. (C) On the same day as his meeting with Duleimi, the Awakening Council governing board agreed to offer ministerial candidates to Maliki's Government. Ahmed passed us a letter addressed to Maliki and marked with the crossed-swords letterhead of SAI, dated October 24. The letter offered to join his government and listed 11 SAI-backed candidates as ministers. Specific ministries were not listed in the

letter, but Ahmed told us that SAI was interested in filling the Deputy Prime Minister slot, as well as the Ministries of State for Foreign Affairs, Higher Education, Women's Affairs, and Provincial Affairs. He also said that SAI might be interested in filling the Minister of Defense position, but added that SAI would probably support the current Minister of Defense. Ahmed said he planned to send the letter to the Prime Minister electronically that same evening, and that he would send the original by courier to the Prime Minister.

15. (C) Ahmed told us he had spoken with Maliki about joining his government and was convinced the PM would accept the SAI offer. He added that negotiations for specific ministries and candidates would need to be discussed with Maliki. Ahmed said he did not at this time intend to offer his own name as a minister, but that he would, as leader of SAI, "control the ministers." He said that SAI appeared to be the only Sunni political force that could work with Maliki at this time.

FROM ANBAR TO BAGHDAD

16. (C) The decision to join Maliki's government comes as SAI, which was formed as an ad-hoc tribal movement in 2006 to drive Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) from Anbar Province, attempts to move more decisively onto the national stage. SAI has recently hosted a number of Sunni-Shi'a reconciliation gatherings in Anbar Province, inviting Shi'a sheikhs from Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiyah, and Muthanna. SAI recently announced that it had opened offices in Mosul, Karbala, Baghdad and Salahadin provinces, although each office's affiliation with SAI appears to be loose. Ahmed has also made it clear that he intends to transform SAI into a political party, which could compete in elections at the

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national level. Ahmed, who heads the 40,000-strong Abu Risha tribe in Ramadi, assumed leadership of SAI within days of his brother Abdul Sattar's September 13 assassination by AQI.

LOCAL INFIGHTING

17. (C) SAI's decision to offer candidates to Maliki also comes after a week of political haggling in Anbar, as SAI moved to strengthen its position in the province by engineering the removal of the Provincial Chief of Police (PCOP), who had been backed by Governor Ma'amoun Sami Rasheed, a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP). SAI sought to replace the PCOP with its own chief of security, Colonel Tarik Yousif Mohammed. The Anbar Provincial Council ultimately decided to leave SAI's Tarik as interim Provincial Chief of Police, delaying the decision on a full-time police chief until later. Tarik, who also holds the title of Deputy Minister of Interior for Police Affairs in Anbar and Salahadin provinces, was one of those listed by SAI as a ministerial candidate.

18. (C) Ahmed and seven other Anbari officials, including Governor Ma'amoun and Anbar Provincial Council Chair Abdulsalam) both IIP members) plan to leave Iraq October 25 for a two-week State Department-sponsored tour of the United States. Though Ahmed told us he will deliver the letter to Maliki before he departs for the U.S., it is not clear how aggressively SAI will pursue the matter with the PM in his absence.

COMMENT

19. (C) SAI's decision to offer ministerial candidates for Maliki's Government is a reversal of SAI's policy under Ahmed's brother, Abdul Sattar. Sattar had steadfastly refused to join Maliki, saying it would break Sunni unity and tie SAI to what he termed a sinking ship. Ahmed initially took this stance, but altered course in recent weeks, telling

us he would consider offering ministers to Maliki if Tawafuq could not make amends with the Prime Minister (reftel). The decision to support Maliki could herald a new national role for SAI, even though it has yet to rise above its tribal roots in Anbar Province. SAI still garners jealousy from many Anbar sheikhs, who resented Sattar as a mid-level sheikh and SAI as a rival power. SAI is making the move to the national stage before it has fully secured its power base in Anbar. END COMMENT.

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

¶10. (U) Below is an unofficial PRT translation of the October 24 letter from Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha to PM Maliki. Begin text of translation:

Number: 1414
Date: 10/24/2007

The Awakening Council of Iraq
To the Prime Minister -- Government of Iraq
Subject: Nomination of Ministers

Greetings,

The Awakening Council of Iraq is honored to inform you that we share a common interest for Iraq. Due to the current political situation in Iraq, and because of the withdrawal of many ministers from your Government, and in order to cover these positions, the Council suggested in its session held on 21 October, 2007 that we would like to implement a policy that will support your Government, and work with you to assist moving the Government forward. Due to this situation, we would like to nominate the following candidates to fill the vacant positions in the Iraqi Cabinet. These listed candidates are capable and knowledgeable in their field.

With Appreciation,

Sheik Ahmed Bezeah Abu Risha
Chairman of the Iraq Awakening Council
24 October, 2007

End Text of translation.

Below is an unofficial PRT translation of the list of ministerial candidates. Begin text of translation:

Name of the candidate nominated for the vacant ministries

Full name, Qualification

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Sadoon Jober Farhan Al Delemi, Consultant for the Iraqi Government, former Minister of Defense

Hamed Farhan Al Hayees, BS in Law

Majeed Ali Al Fahdawi, Academic Staff

Maher Saleh Alwai, Academic/Salahdin University, PhD in Law

Saleh Rasheed Mohareb Al Delemi, MS in Mathematical Engineering

Dhari Abed Dawood Al Reshawi, MS in History

Tarik Yousif Mohammed Al Theyabi, BS in Security Science, Deputy Minister of Interior for Police Affairs in Anbar Province

Sadoon Abdul Mohsen Thyab Al Kharbet, MS in History

Asmah Saheb Karim Al Shookri, MS in Civil Engineering

Asaed Obed Al Jomeli, PhD in Law

Maher Faysal Saleh Al Delemi, PhD in Law/BS in
Literature/French, English

End Text of translation.
CROCKER